News release

Bright forecast for retailer whatever the weather

23 August 2002

Supermarket giant Safeway will be watching the weather closely this bank holiday weekend to plan the impact it will have on sales.

Aside from seasonal trends and promotions, the weather is the biggest influence on its sales - particularly on key dates such as bank holidays and sporting events - which is why one of the UK's largest grocers has announced it is to renew its contract with forecasting experts at the Met Office.

For the past four years, the Met Office has provided Safeway's forecasting teams and category managers with weather services. The Met Office estimates Safeway is saving £4.8 million a year in increased sales and reduced wastage by taking weather forecasts into account.

The Met Office provides Safeway with an internet delivered service, detailing 10-day forecasts, at national and regional level, updated 365 days a year. This includes accurate temperature forecasts, (temperature is a key factor in affecting demand); historical data to monitor performance; direct access to a forecaster for advice on the latest developments, and even ferry crossing information to help plan incoming deliveries of produce from abroad as well as to remote island stores.

As part of the innovative relationship with Safeway, the Met Office is trialling a new mobile phone service with store managers, which provides users with a text message forecast to store level.

Mark Aylwin, Supply Chain Operations Director for Safeway sees significant benefit in the relationship with the Met Office.

He said: "The impact of the weather is seen across many areas of our business. By taking the weather into account, we can accurately predict customer demand, which means making the most out of sales and reducing waste through efficient delivery, staffing and stock control."

An independent study into the impact of the weather, commissioned by the Met Office, reveals that retailers lose £2.7 billion a year because of the vagaries of the British weather. They're affected by delayed deliveries, surplus or insufficient stock and suffer financial penalties as a result.

Tim Ormerod, product marketing manager for retail at the Met Office said: "We work very closely with Safeway as they appreciate that managing the weather and business success increasingly go hand in hand. The benefits are clear - from stocking the right items at the right time to running relevant promotions to coincide with the weather. Like all businesses they cannot change the weather but they manage the impact, and use forecasts to boost sales."

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